



**TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT FAIR HOUSING CENTER
IN SUPPORT OF H.B. 5389—AN ACT CONCERNING COLLATERAL
CONSEQUENCES OF A CRIMINAL RECORD**

Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Maria Cuerda. I am client advocate at the Connecticut Fair Housing Center. I am here in support of H.B. 5389, An Act Concerning Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Record. The Center is a statewide nonprofit that assists Connecticut residents who have been denied access to housing because of discrimination.

For the more than 100 million Americans who have some type of criminal record, access to housing is limited. The Center frequently receives calls from people denied access to housing because of overly broad criminal records screening criteria. This happens, even when the disqualifying record is a mere arrest, a decades-old conviction, or a minor crime unrelated to their suitability as a tenant. Because of the well-documented racial and ethnic disparities in all phases of the criminal justice system, criminal records screening may result in race and national origin discrimination and perpetuate racial segregation. It also prevents people recently released from incarceration from accessing decent, safe, affordable housing, even though stable housing is the leading factor in determining whether someone can successfully re-integrate into society.

The Center is strongly in support of H.B. 5389 and other legislation that recognizes that people with criminal records should be treated with dignity and given a chance to find a decent home and earn a living, free from discrimination.